

# Statistical Brief



State Center for Health Statistics

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## Hispanic Childhood Mortality in North Carolina, 1999-2003

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### INTRODUCTION

North Carolina has the fastest-growing Hispanic/Latino population in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates for 2004 show the total Latino population to be 517,617 individuals or 6 percent of the total North Carolina population.<sup>2</sup>

Because much of the growth in the Hispanic population has occurred among the younger age groups, health issues affecting Hispanic children are of increasing importance. This report is a descriptive summary of childhood deaths in North Carolina from 1999 to 2003, with a particular focus on the Hispanic population. The purpose of this study is to provide data that may help identify prevention opportunities that will reduce child fatalities.

### METHODS

This study is based on North Carolina death certificate data, using the reported underlying cause of death. The rate is the number of deaths in a category per 100,000 children (ages 1-17). Data are presented for the following age categories: 1-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years, and 15-17 years. The data are reported by child's place of residence, not place of death. The summary statistics in this report present various causes of death for all children combined, as well for children of Hispanic/Latino origin. In this report, the "total" category includes persons of both Hispanic and non-Hispanic ethnicity. Ethnicity information on death certificates is based on information supplied to the funeral director by a family

member or other informant. Trends in death rates over the past five years are presented. North Carolina began using the ICD-10 coding for causes of death in 1999, so the death rates in this report for the 1999-2003 period are consistent in cause of death categorization.

### RESULTS

From 1999 through 2003, the total number of deaths among children ages 1-17 was 2,730 out of a population of 9,428,820, for a crude death rate (CDR) of 29.0 deaths per 100,000 population (see Table 1). This compares to a CDR for Hispanic children of 28.2. The overall child death rate during the five-year period declined by 11.2 percent from 1999 to 2003. Even with a slightly larger population of children in 2003 compared to 1999, the number of children who died decreased by 34 (-6%). Among Hispanics, there was not a clear trend in the CDR during this time, due in part to the small number of deaths each year. However, the 2003 rate of 23.1 was the lowest of any of the previous 4 years, and reversed the increases seen in 2001 and 2002.

Male children had higher death rates in the total group as well as in the Hispanic/Latino population. Among all children, the male CDR was 1.45 times that of the female rate. For Hispanic children, the male/female rate ratio was 1.28. Even though the observed difference between male and female child fatalities among all children is statistically significant ( $P$ -value  $<.0001$ ), for Hispanic children there is no significant difference between male and female children.



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